





# Civil War Episodes

## Battle of the Wilderness

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
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ink, and we believe, that

TEACHING SPELLING.—Good spellers are

When we left the common school

examining.—Galloway

mechanical work of continual teaching

## The Battles in Virginia.

### TERRIFIC LOSSES ON BOTH SIDES!

### The Rebels Retreating Towards Richmond!

### THE ADMINISTRATION CONFIDENT OF VICTORY!!

The past week has been one of the most intensely exciting that has ever been experienced in this country. All kinds of rumors have been afloat, and the authorities at Washington, instead of furnishing the public with a concise and reliable statement of the situation have apparently been doing all they could to mystify the facts. The telegraphic dispatches which appeared in the papers were, if possible, more confused and trashy than ever, and were it not for the various correspondents of the city papers, the people would find it totally impossible to obtain anything like a plain understanding of the state of affairs. We think, on the whole, our forces have met with considerable success, but thus far nothing that we have seen, warrants the conclusion that any great victory has been gained. Lee has fallen back from his old position, after hard fighting and heavy loss to both sides, but whether he has done so from necessity, or merely to draw our army away from its supplies, remains yet to be seen. We gather from the mass of stuff that has reached us by the daily papers, what appears to be worthy of most confidence:

The Grand Army of the Potomac crossed the Rapidan on Wednesday. The 2d corps moved on Tuesday to the Mills opposite Ely's Ford. On Wednesday morning at 4 o'clock the cavalry crossed and drove the rebel pickets from the opposite heights, meeting no opposition. On Thursday morning the rebels pressed our pickets and appeared to be in strong force on our right. The 5th New York cavalry skirmishing on the Orange C. H. road near Perkins' Tavern, were driven in with a severe loss, leaving many wounded on the field. Gen. Griffin's division was marched forward on our right about 11 o'clock to feel the enemy's position, and were met by the rebel Gen. A. P. Hill, supported by Gen. Ewell. A determined fight of one hour and a half ensued, in

which Warren handsomely drove from his position with the infliction of great loss. Griffin's division suffered severely, nearly 1,000 being killed, wounded and missing.

Finding his effort to break our centre futile, the enemy next attempted to interpose an overwhelming force between Warren and Hancock, the latter of whom, in accordance with orders, was marching his corps rapidly to form a junction with the former. Fortunately, his advance, consisting of Birney's corps, came up just in time to circumvent the rebel General, who at 2:30 p. m., commenced a terrific onslaught on the divisions of Birney, Gibson and Getty, the latter of whom had been temporarily detached to form the extreme right of Hancock's command. The fight raged hotly until some time after dark, and resulted in the complete repulse of the enemy at all points. Our loss in this engagement does not probably exceed 1,000 men.

Scarcely any artillery was brought into requisition, the character of the ground rendering it useless. The battle field is covered with a thick growth of underbrush and medium-sized oak trees, and it is owing to that fact that our losses are comparatively light. Our capture in prisoners are about 500.

When Hancock's corps retired toward Parker's store, 300 of the 18th Pennsylvania cavalry, under Maj. Brunton, sent to relieve the pickets several miles below, on the Spottsylvania road, were attacked by a large body of rebel troopers and driven back to Todd's tavern in confusion and quite a large number taken prisoners by the rebels.

Up to this time Gen. Burnside's corps, numbering 30,000 men, had taken no part in the battle, but at 5:30 o'clock was marching into position to engage in the bloody contest of the third day's battle.

The *Herald* has the following relative to the battles of Friday and Saturday:

At 5 o'clock in the morning as the first dawn of the morning was merging into day, the contest was renewed along the entire line and the roar and hum of battle came from every quarter. From certain indications it was concluded Lee was re-enforcing Longstreet in Hancock's front, and a part of Burnside's corps was accordingly moved to his support by taking a position to the left of Gen. Warren and completely filling the gap into which the two brigades had been thrown the preceding evening. On moving at daylight towards their assigned position they found it occupied by rebels prepared to dispute its possession. The fighting at this point was over by 9 o'clock.

Finding it impossible to dislodge the rebels from their position early in the morning, Hancock was driven back close to his breastworks by superior force, but subsequently rallied his men and succeeded in regaining most of his lost ground. Between 10 and 11 o'clock, however, Longstreet succeeded in turning the left of his advance and throwing it into great confusion. This extended along the entire line and came near involving the whole corps in inextricable confusion. He was once more driven back to his breastworks and the rebels actually planted their colors outside of them, but could not sustain themselves and were repulsed. At this

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time heavy re-inforcements were thrown to his support from Burnside's corps, and his men were rallied and taken well in hand and all danger of further disaster removed.

The charge of Longstreet was completely overwhelming. Solid masses of infantry were hurled upon Hancock, line after line, with an impetuosity which nothing could withstand.

It was exceedingly fortunate for the 6th corps and the whole army that he was checked at this critical period and driven back with as much precipitation as he came. The ground in front of Hancock had been fought over a number of times, and the wounded and dying on the field were a vast multitude; many of them had laid there long, but a majority had been carried away by the party in temporary possession of the ground.

At night Hancock occupied his own breastworks, and had nothing but prisoners and rebel dead to show for the slaughter of the two day's fighting. He behaved with conspicuous gallantry throughout, and was on the field in person where dangers were the thickest.

Gen. Warren was also hotly assaulted along his entire line, and the utmost surprise was manifested at the number of troops that Lee was able to bring into action. This corps retained its first position however, till darkness. About midnight a charge was made which gave way and was unable to regain the ground thus lost. This of course compelled the abandonment of a great portion of the line of breastworks on the front of his corps, and brought the skirmish line within half a mile of Generals Grant and Meade's headquarters.

General Sedgwick's corps maintained itself against the vigorous assaults of superior numbers at different times during the day, and had no serious reverse until late in the evening. Toward dark, however, the enemy, having again shifted from his right to his left, suddenly fell upon the extreme right of our right wing. It consisted of Gen. Milroy's old brigade, whose command had been assumed only the night before by General Seymour. Our men were engaged in building up in trenchments at the fire; the enemy pushed upon them before they had time to form and almost the whole brigade was swallowed up by the rebel line. Part of Gen. Shaler's brigade, on General Seymour's left, shared the fate of the latter. Both these generals were captured. This successful planning movement threatened great peril to the whole army, but General Sedgwick succeeded, by personal exposure and the energetic efforts of himself and staff, in confining the rout to his extreme right. There was grave apprehension at the general headquarters that this success of the rebels might enable the enemy to strike our rear, and orders were issued to prepare for a change of position during the night.

The enemy, however, did not follow up their advantage, but abandoned the ground they had gained during the night. Our right was contracted and strongly entrenched before morning. With this last attack of the enemy upon Gen. Sedgwick's right the battle ceased.

The battle recommenced on Saturday, but the firing was desultory and scatter-

ing. No fierce attacks were made on either side. A few sharp shooters along the lines kept the air resonant with the sharp crack of their rifles, but both generals were intent on strategy and neither was anxious to bring on a general engagement.

At daylight on Saturday general orders were received ordering the trains that had reached Ely's ford to proceed back again to Chancellorsville, and up to noon on Saturday they were constantly passing down the pike towards Spottsylvania C. H., to which the divisions of Gens. Gregg and Wilson had preceded. During the day, Burnside's corps also marched to the same place. Lee discovering the move which completely flanked his right, began falling back, and our army encouraged by the prospects of victory, closely pursued him. The rebels slowly retired, and made a stand at Spottsylvania Court House. A messenger has come who says he left Spottsylvania Court House at 9 A. M. Monday, and that on Saturday Hancock was compelled to retire on the Spottsylvania road until he was joined by Burnside, when he held his own ground.

Advices from the front to 3 o'clock Monday afternoon are received. On Sunday General Warren encountered Lee's rear guard at Spottsylvania C. H. A sharp fight immediately ensued. Our troops were at first repulsed, but rallying advanced with great impetuosity upon the enemy, driving him beyond the Court House. On Monday an artillery duel was opened and kept up South of Spottsylvania.

It is reported that we have taken about 2,000 prisoners, and the number of rebel dead and wounded—the dispatches say—largely exceeds ours. Our wounded are reported to be 15,000, most of whom are at Fredericksburg, and so thick that they are lying in the streets and upon the pavements.

A cavalry patrol ordered out could not do duty as it was difficult to pass between the rows of wounded without trampling on them. It is said there are between 2,000 and 3,000 rebel wounded there, also who were left upon the field.

Gens. Sedgwick, Hays and Wadsworth, of our side, are killed, and two or three rebel generals are reported to have been killed. On both sides a number of Generals are wounded. Several of General Grant's staff officers are killed or wounded.

A simultaneous movement with Grant's army was made up the James river by the troops of Gen. Butler's command, under the immediate leadership of General "Baldy" Smith. On the 7th inst. Gens. Heckinon's and Brooks's brigades advanced on the railroad leading from Petersburg to Richmond, and after quite a severe skirmish with the enemy they succeeded in destroying about three miles of the track and burning two important railroad bridges. On the 6th instant, when our troops took possession of City Point, it was so complete a surprise that the enemy's signal corps, consisting of twenty-seven men, were all captured.

#### Later Dispatches.

The *Tribune* gives the following account of the progress of events after Saturday:

Gen. Warren's corps passed on through Tood's tavern on Saturday night, towards the front and at sunrise were within two

and a half miles of Spottsylvania court house and immediately were put into action to relieve the cavalry. The enemy were also just in time for a similar movement, and Stuart's cavalry were simultaneously relieved by Longstreet's corps of infantry.

The 5th corps, tired with a long night march, rushed into action with a double quick, General Robinson's division leading the charge. The rebels yielded before them, and we pushed them on for three miles. During the battle of this morning General Robinson was wounded. The last engagement of this morning's fight was severe. Our losses were great.

Gen. Robinson was severely wounded. We charged them so far and so impetuously that our men were outflanked on the left and had to fall back a short distance to form their lines anew. The enemy gained no advantage, for our artillery was brought into action, and the rebels were unable to occupy the position which our men had abandoned.

The Fifth corps had suffered in previous fights so severely that there was not a single division of it in perfect fighting trim, but General Auger, commanding the regulars, filed in from the right and the position was held. Another desperate effort must be made before Spottsylvania court house would be in our possession; that point once reached, an open country and fair battle fields lie before us, and we already begin to realize to some extent the advantages of "getting out of the wilderness."

About noon the batteries were posted, ours on the edge of a piece of woods, theirs on an opposite hill.

The discharge of shell for some time was quite brisk and severe. As evening approached General Grant started to the front to take another glance at the position and inspire our troops for the grand onset, which was soon to be made.—Troops from the Fifth and Sixth corps, in several heavy lines were concentrated in front of the position to which the rebels had fallen back, after the engagement in the early part of the day.

Gen. Wright's Div., already distinguished by most gallant conduct, took the lead. At 6½ o'clock, a shout was raised and the attack commenced as our troops moved out of the woods, through a narrow, open space and up a tangled thicket, which was held and fortified by the enemy. At 7:15 the light began to fade away and the heat of the firing began to cease. Hither to the ear could scarcely distinguish any fluctuation in sounds which came from those gloomy pines. But now the enemy commenced to give way and the shouts of our men receding as the enemy were pushed along, showed that the issues of the attack were favorable and decided.—

We had beaten the enemy, had driven them from the position which they had so strongly contested, but the darkness was now so great that we could not safely press them further, and Spottsylvania C. H. still remained that night in the hands of the rebels. Monday morning was spent quietly in camp, both for the much needed rest of the soldiers and for replenishing the army with rations.

Monday evening, Gen. Hancock with the 2d corps had pushed his line across the Po, and the enemy were falling back before him.

Our loss in the battles of Sunday and yesterday, will probably amount to at least 2,500. We now hold about 5,000 prisoners. General Morris, of the 8th corps, who was standing beside Gen. Sedgwick when he was killed, was wounded also in the leg but not seriously.

Washington, May 11.—It is reported that Grant has flanked Lee, both on the right and left. A terrible battle occurred yesterday. Lee was driven across the South Anna river. Grant is still in close pursuit.

#### The Western Army.

It was understood that the Army under General Sherman was to engage the rebels in Georgia at the same time with Grant, in order to prevent Lee from obtaining reinforcements from Johnson. The movement appears to have been delayed somewhat, and we have heard of no decisive engagements taking place. A flank march by McPherson found the rebels stronger than was expected, and had to be given up. The absence of some of Gen. Sherman's troops with Banks leaves him it is feared with too small a force to cope successfully with Johnson.

#### Butler's Movements.

In spite of Gen. Butler's boastful dispatches, we do not see that he has done much yet to warrant any great hopes from that quarter. Our gunboats have failed to pass the rebel forts and obstructions along the James river, and one of them has been destroyed by a torpedo, and another by a rebel ball penetrating its boiler. Gen. Butler is somewhere in the neighborhood of City Point, and his troops have had several engagements with those under Beauregard, and gained some ground. The friends of Butler regard his movement as one that cannot fail of success.

#### Gen. Banks' Department.

The New York *Evening Post*, certainly one of the ablest, and, we think, the very ablest Republican paper in the country, comments with much severity on General Banks' administration in Louisiana. It charges that he "has reduced the multitudes of people made free by the proclamation of the President to a condition of serfdom which is hardly one degree removed from the system of slavery which before prevailed. The negroes are as much in the power of the planters as they ever were, with the single difference that the overseers have been changed to provost marshals." The *Post* adds:

It is among the charges brought by some of the best friends of the Union at the South, against the efficiency of General Banks, that he does not control the peculating propensities of his subordinates. As a specimen of the letters we sometimes receive, we give the substance of one written by a lady, which is doubtless exaggerated, but which may serve to show the nature of the evils complained of. She says: "It is impossible for one at the North to conceive of the official corruption that reigns; officers and civilians alike have abandoned themselves to the accursed lust of speculation. In the distribution of opportunities none are more favored than rebels who pretend to have recanted.—Secession is as rampant as ever it was, though disguised because it is so profitable to be an 'allegiant,' etc.





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